

VZCZCXRO5156
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH
DE RUEHGO #0228/01 0641106
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 051106Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5810
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1356
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0206
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4490
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3777
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7302
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4862
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 0061
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 1066
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1080
RUDKIA/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 0900
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000228

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, G/AIAG; PACOM FOR FPA; USDA FOR
FAS/PECAD, FAS/CNMP, FAS/AAD, APHIS; BANGKOK FOR
USAID:JMACARTHUR), APHIS:NCARDENAS, REO:JWALLER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [AMED](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA DOES ITS BEST TO COPE WITH AI OUTBREAK

REF: A. RANGOON 0221
[1](#)B. RANGOON 0212

RANGOON 00000228 001.2 OF 002

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Burmese authorities reported the death from Avian Influenza of sixteen chickens and five ducks in three additional townships of Rangoon from February 28 through March 2, in addition to those at the initial site (ref B). After tests for AI were positive at the three new sites, officials culled the remaining poultry and disinfected the areas. Livestock and residents within a one-kilometer radius of each outbreak remain under surveillance. The source of AI infection in Rangoon has not been determined. On March 4, WHO supported a training course for health workers at Waibagi hospital, the designated infectious diseases facility in Rangoon. WHO representatives said the GOB response to the current outbreak was systematic and organized, showing marked improvement over its performance at the first outbreak in March 2006, although problem areas remain. End summary.

Rapid Response to New Cases

[1](#)2. (SBU) The GOB announced on March 3 that three chickens and five ducks in Thingangyun Township and two chickens in Insein Township found dead on February 28 had tested positive for AI with Rapid Test Kits. Since these cases were at small residential farms, authorities did not verify with PCR testing, but immediately culled all remaining poultry and disinfected the farms. On March 2, eleven dead chickens were found at a commercial farm in Hlaing Thaya Township. Rapid Test Kits, then PCR testing confirmed HPAI, and again, authorities culled all remaining poultry and disinfected the farm. Contacts told us that high-level officials personally oversaw the burning and disinfecting operations.

13. (SBU) On March 5, WHO Country Representative Adik Wibowo told Charge that Burmese government officials had dealt with the current outbreak in a systematic, organized way. The Minister, Deputy Minister, and Director General of Health traveled to Rangoon from Nay Pyi Taw to handle the response. Also, at the Minister of Health's request, WHO supported a training drill for health workers at Waibagi Hospital, which is the designated facility for infectious diseases in Rangoon. The twelve members from the family whose farm experienced the initial outbreak remain under observation at Waibagi, although none show symptoms at this point.

14. (U) Announcements have appeared daily in government media describing the numbers of Rangoon bird deaths (including crows, pigeons, sparrows and quail) reported and investigated. All birds other than ducks or chickens have tested negative for AI, according to the reports. These announcements also cautioned pet owners to keep their pets from eating dead birds; advised breeders on effective disinfectant solutions; warned farmers to keep wild birds and crows away from poultry farms; recommended all citizens to bury dead crows; and ordered farm owners to maintain stronger biosecurity measures.

Problem Areas

15. (SBU) While the government's quick and thorough response to the outbreak has received praise from the international community, problem areas remain. These include:

-- Inadequate biosafety at markets: On March 3 and 4, embassy employees witnessed sellers butchering and dressing poultry in Rangoon markets in unsanitary conditions, without proper facilities or practices to clean and disinfect the seller's

RANGOON 00000228 002.2 OF 002

area, clothing, and skin. No posters or pamphlets with guidance on proper procedures to prevent AI transmission were evident in any markets. We estimate Rangoon has 25-30 markets, many of which continue to sell poultry.

-- Uninformed Response: A contact informed us that the Yangon City Development Council turned off the water supply to parts of Mayangone Township, site of the initial outbreak, in an attempt to prevent the spread of AI through water seepage and flow from or near the affected farm. WHO Country Representative Adik Wibowo promised to follow up with GOB authorities after we informed her of this development, to urge them to turn the water back on as soon as possible to allow area residents to maintain a higher standard of hygiene.

-- Information Campaign Slow to Rural Areas: The bulk of educational posters and pamphlets designed by UNICEF and funded by the Japanese Trust Fund and other donors have only recently been approved and passed to the government for wide distribution. Wibowo expressed concern that, on her recent trip to Sagaing Division, she did not see any AI informational materials on display. In Rangoon, posters are visible in some restaurants, but not at markets and other places where live and freshly-killed poultry is handled. Local sources tell us that many Burmese continue to believe that backyard poultry are immune from AI. An aggressive public education campaign is needed to change these strongly held beliefs and increase public awareness of proper precautions.

Assistance

16. (U) At the request of the Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, USAID Bangkok will send a specialist to advise on lab procedures on March 6 and on human health issues later this week. LBVD officials have promised assistance to expedite their visas and travel. Director Generals from both LBVD and the Department of Health have

requested additional PPEs, as they are using their current supply quickly for response and monitoring teams. We coordinated with USAID Bangkok to forward the request to Washington. We will continue to consult closely with WHO, FAO and LBVD officials monitoring the current situation.

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